

JOHN & JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (WEST PARCEL),
BUILDING NO. 12
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5383-L

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PA
51-PHILA,
695L-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (West Parcel), BUILDING 12
HABS No. PA-5383-L

Location:

4041-4055 Ridge Avenue
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Rouse Urban Housing, Inc.
1500 Walnut Street, 19th Floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Present Occupant:

Mixed commercial and industrial tenants.

Significance:

Building 12, built in 1914 as a machine shop, is important as it documents the increasing specialization of buildings on the site and the continued prosperity of the Dobsons into the twentieth century.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Date(s) of erection:

1914. Building 12 appears on the 1914 Hexamer Atlas.

Architect:

Unknown.

Original/Subsequent Owners:

See Chain of Title.

Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Unknown.

Original Plans and Construction:

Building 12 was built as a one-story, roughly trapezoidal building. Original interior wood columns subdivide the interior and carry girders which support roof beams. The original roof is elevated, creating a continuous clerestory around the entire building. The building was built and continuously used as a machine shop.

Alterations and Additions:

Mid-twentieth-century original window openings infilled and original wood sash replaced with steel.

B. Historical Context

Building 12 was built in 1914 at a time when the Dobsons' mill employed 11,000 workers. The building was constructed over a 12' reservoir on the northwest corner of the site. The building's design was a departure from the earlier structures on the site with its clerestory and clear span interior. Whereas earlier structures were essentially utilitarian mill buildings, this wide span, open space interior, differentiated the building's function as a machine shop.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Architectural Character:

Building 12 reflects the same rubblestone construction relieved by brick arches as the earlier buildings on the site. However, its one-story construction and impressive wood span are unique from the other buildings.

Condition of Fabric:

The building is in fair condition.

B. Description of Exterior

Overall Dimensions:

S elev.-208.8'; E elev.-115.4'; N elev.-133.8'; W elev.-115'.

Foundations:

Rubblestone

Walls:

Randomly laid rubble schist relieved by brick arches. Heavy vegetation partially obscures the west elevation of the building.

Structural System Framing:

Three rows of interior wood columns carry girders which support roof beams.

Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:

Exterior steel stairway on west elevation and concrete loading platform and concrete stoop on east elevation.

Chimneys:

None.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

West elevation- window opening converted to doorway, steel fire door. East elevation- loading bay with steel door under brick segmental arch, steel door in infilled window opening.

Windows/Shutters:

Large window openings on all elevations, the majority, infilled with stuccoed concrete masonry units, retain their shallow brick segmental arches. Select openings have modern steel industrial sash. Windows originally contained industrial steel sash.

Roof:

Central raised clerestory projects above lower roof surrounding it. Clerestory's original wood windows have been removed; openings infilled and randomly placed modern wood double-hung sash installed. Roof clerestory and windows are covered with roofing felts and paper.

C. Description of Interior

Floor Plans:

All floors are trapezoidal in shape, undivided except for wood columns.

Stairways:

None.

Flooring:

Concrete.

Wall and Ceiling Finishes:

Walls have been stuccoed and painted, ceilings have exposed rafter construction.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

No surviving original or historic interior doors.

Windows:

No notable trim on windows.

Decorative Features and Trim:

N/A.

Hardware:

Original hardware is presumed to have been utilitarian in character.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: See PA-5383-C for heating system, air conditioning is N/A, ventilation is through rooftop clerestory and windows.

Lighting: Modern and strip fluorescent, ceiling mounted, lighting.

Plumbing: Ceiling mounted, sprinkler fire suppression system.

D. Site

General Setting and Orientation:

Building 12 is located at the northwestern corner of the west parcel of the Dobson site on southward slope. The building is constructed over a 12' reservoir.

Historic Landscape Design:

See Historic Context Section.

Outbuildings:

N/A.